FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/DECISION RECORD

EA Number: AZ-040-2005-0024

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: N/A

BLM Office: Safford Field Office

DECISION:

It is my decision to implement the proposed action as described and stipulated in the Black Hills Backcountry Byway Realignment Environmental Assessment, AZ-040-2005-0024. Implementing the proposed road realignment improves public safety and vehicle access to the Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area. The proposed action resolves defined issues, meets the purpose and need for action and would not affect any critical elements and other resources described within the environmental assessment.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

Based upon the Black Hills Backcountry Byway Realignment Environmental Assessment, AZ-040-2005-0024, I conclude that this action is in conformance with the approved land use plan, Safford District Resource Management Plan and the Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area. Implementation of the proposed action will result in no significant impact to the human environment. Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

MITIGATION/STIPULATIONS:

Cultural and Paleontological Resource

1. Any archaeological or historical artifacts or remains, or vertebrate fossils discovered during construction, maintenance and use shall be left intact and undisturbed; all work in the area shall stop immediately and the Assistance Field Manager for Planning and Monitoring shall be notified immediately. Commencement of operations shall be allowed upon clearance by the Assistant Field Manager.
2. An additional cultural and paleontological resource survey may be required in the event that the project location is changed or additional surface disturbing operations are added to the project after the initial survey. Any such survey would have to be completed prior to commencement of operations.
3. If in connection with operations under this authorization, any human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects of cultural patrimony as defined in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (P.L. 101-601; Stat. 3048; U.S.C. 3001) are discovered, the permittee shall stop operations in the immediate area of the discovery, protect the remains and objects, and immediately notify the Assistance Field Manager for Planning and Monitoring of the discovery. The permittee shall continue to protect the immediate area of the discovery until notified by the Assistance Field Manager that operations may resume.

General Project Stipulations

1. Force Account crew is responsible for controlling vehicular traffic at the construction site during both work and non-work hours. Non-work hour traffic control and public safety shall be provided through cautionary signing and other control methods.
2. Project work would occur on week days reducing visitor access conflicts.
3. All equipment and vehicles shall be power washed before going to the site to lessen the chance of introducing noxious weeds.
4. All vehicles shall remain on existing roads, parking areas, turn-arounds, or disturbed sites unless involved in work on a site authorized for disturbance.
5. *All work must be performed with the intention to incur only the minimum amount of disturbance necessary to achieve the objectives.*
6. Excess fill material must be spread in a thin layer over the terrain, on the road surface or removed from the site.
7. Rehabilitation work including site clean-up, seeding, mulching and vertical mulching, matting, water control devices, and other measures would be provided should unauthorized disturbance occur.

401 Conditions

1. The Permittee shall provide a copy of these State CWA 401 Conditions and permit specific conditions to all appropriate contractors and subcontractors. The applicant shall also post a copy of these conditions in a water resistant location at the construction site where it may be seen by the workers. If there are any substantive changes in the proposed project that may affect water quality, the applicant shall notify ADEQ. Failure to do so may result in the revocation of this Certification.
2. The Permittee is responsible for obtaining all other permits, certifications and licenses that may be required by federal, state or local authorities. Activities which may require other approvals include: construction activities disturbing greater than five acres of land (NPDES Stormwater Permit), use of reclaimed wastewater for dust control or irrigation (Reclaimed Water Permit), or dewatering of construction sites to a surface waterbody (NPDES process Wastewater Permit).
3. Erosion control and/or bank protection features (e.g., silt fences, straw bales, rip-rap, or mulching) shall be used, where appropriate, to minimize channel or bank erosion and soil loss. These features shall be maintained, as necessary, during preconstruction and construction periods. Denuded areas shall be revegetatede as soon as possible with native plants and seed.
4. Earthen fill placed in locations subject to scour shall contain not more than ten percent of particles finer than 0.25 mm diameter (passing a No. 60 sieve, on a dry weight basis).
5. Upon completion of construction, the work area shall be restored to maintain the stability of upstream and downstream segment of water of the U.S. (WUS) with respect to erosion and sedimentation.
6. The permittee is responsible for ensuring construction material and/or fill, placed within the ordinary high water mark (OHWM), is free from substances (including fines that may be associated with rip-rap material) that can cause or contribute to pollution of a surface water.
7. Debris (such as soil, silt, sand, rubbish, cement, asphalt, oil or petroleum products, organic materials, tires or batteries) derived from construction activities shall not be deposited at any site where it may be washed into W.U.S and shall be properly disposed of after completion of the work.

8. The Permittee shall have a spill containment plan to ensure that polluntants are contained, removed and properly disposed of. In addition, equipment maintenance shall be preformed at an upland site away from W.U.S.
9. Runoff and seepage from roadways, embankments, golf courses and other alterations of the natural environment into W.U.S. shall not cause a violation of Water Quality Standards.
10. Water used for dust suppression shall not contain contaminants that could violate Surface Water Quality Standards.
11. Access roadways and staging areas shall be designed to allow normal storm flows to pass unimpeded. There shall be no significant change to the hydraulic conditions of the upstream and down stream watercourses as a result of these temporary construction features.
12. Temporary cluverted crossings shall be adequately sized to handle the expected flow and properly set with end sections splash pads, or headwalls that dissipate water energy to control erosion at the outlets. The culverted crossing shall be constructed to accommodate the overtopping of the road and armored to prevent erosion of the road fill.
13. At culverted and /or bridged roadway crossings, only concrete pilings, concrete supporting walls, galvanized steel, plastic, or aluminum shall be used in jurisdictional waters. Materials other than those specified must be approved by ADEQ.
14. Flows shall be diverted around work operations or the work shall be performed during low water conditions when the area is naturally dewatered. When there is water flow within the construction area, construction activity shall cease and construction equipment relocated outside the watercourse.

COMPLIANCE MONITORING:

Safford Field Office staff will monitor and document compliance with the project stipulations.

/Bonnie Winslow/
Safford Field Office Assistant Manager Date: May 01, 2005
Planning, Monitoring and Gila Box RNCA

Black Hills Backcountry Byway Realignment Environmental Assessment

AZ-040-2005-0024

Bureau of Land Management
Safford Field Office
Gila Box Riparian
National Conservation Area

Prepared by:
Jeff Wilbanks
Outdoor Recreation Planner
April 26, 2005

Black Hills Backcountry Byway Realignment
Environmental Assessment

EA Number: AZ-040-2005-0024
Lease/Serial/Case File No.: N/A
Applicant: Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
BLM Office: Safford Field Office
Location of Proposed Action: R.29E., T.6S., Sec. 25, SE1/4; Gila and Salt River Meridian; see attached maps.
EA Team Leader: Jeff Wilbanks, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area (RNCA).

CONFORMANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAND USE PLAN

The Proposed Action is subject to the following land use plan:

Name of Plan: Safford District Resource Management Plan (RMP)

Date Approved: Record of Decision Part I, September 1992; Record of Decision Part II, July 1994.

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the applicable land use plan:

CHECK ONE
(X) YES ( ) NO

TA07 Reconstruct the following roads to provide or improve vehicle access for administration and use of the public lands. Three miles of Left Fork of Markham Creek Road, Three miles of Military trail, one half mile of Virgus Canyon Road, Five and one half miles of Jackson Cabin Road, one mile of Buckeye Canyon Road, and *other roads* as determined in the future to be included in the District Transportation Plan. RMP page 27.

Name of Plan: Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area Management Plan

Date Approved: Decision Record, December 19, 1997. This plan is tiered to the Safford District RMP. The Gila Box Plan is available on CD at the Safford Field Office.

Designated Road Network The Black Hills Backcountry Byway is selected for scheduled and corrective maintenance (page 15).

PURPOSE/NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION

Purpose of the proposed action is to improve public safety by realigning a portion of the Black Hills Backcountry Byway (Byway) and reconstructing the Byway and United States Highway 191 (191) intersection. The existing Byway approach to the191 intersection has a 14 percent

slope. The steepness of the approach makes it difficult to access 191 from the Byway and to egress 191 onto the Byway. Line of sight for vehicle operators leaving or approaching the intersection is relatively short. Also, there are no deceleration/turn lanes or median crossover for the intersection. Providing these facilities, which greatly improves public safety, is impossible at the existing intersection site. Realigning the Byway and relocating the intersection approximately 600 feet to the south allows the space needed for the safety facilities.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Proposed Action

The proposed action would realign approximately .5 mile of the most northern portion of the Black Hill Backcountry Byway and construct a new Byway/US Highway 191 intersection. The project site is located about 5 miles north of Threeway and 4 miles south of Clifton approximately 600 feet south from the existing Byway/191 intersection (Maps 1&2). The project is a partnering effort including BLM, Greenlee County, City of Clifton, and Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT). Project work includes 3 phases with Phase I beginning early summer of 2005. Phase II is schedule for 2006. Phase III start date is currently open awaiting advertisement and acceptance of the Phase III project bid.

All construction activities would be contained within the project boundary as depicted on Map 3. The project area, approximately 40 acres, has been inventoried, surveyed and cleared for construction. However, only about 60 percent of the area is estimated to receive project initiated impacts.

Phase I: Early Summer 2005

BLM, Safford Field Office, Force Account Crew and Greenlee County, Road Maintenance Crew would work together to accomplish Phase I. This phase includes blading and clearing vegetation within the project and culvert footprints to install a culvert for the new road (Map 4). The culvert is 42in. x 334ft. with metal end sections requiring blading and clearing an area approximately 60ft. x 375ft. An existing two track trail provides access from the Byway to within approximately 200ft. of the culvert installation site. The existing trail and the remaining 200ft. (centerline for the new road) would be bladed and cleared providing a 12ft. path to the culvert site. The culvert would be covered with a minimum of 1 foot of fill. Fill would be obtained from a nearby designated gravel pit. This cover fill will hold the new culvert in place until road construction begins in Phase II (2006). The trail used to access the culvert installation site would be barricaded until the start of Phase II. Disturbed sites would be seeded with native vegetation and erosion control measures taken to lessen site erosion.

Phase II: 2006

ADOT contractor would be responsible for implementing Phase II actions. Phase II includes blading and clearing vegetation for approximately .5 mile within the project footprint for the new road and installation of the 88ft. Highway 191 culvert extension (Map 4). The road bed would be 28ft. wide with 2ft. shoulders and a 6in. AB road surface. Fill for the new road would have a 4:1 slope spanning from the shoulders out to about 350ft. at widest point of the fill. This point is at the culvert crossing which is also the minimum width necessary for the drainage crossing. The contractor would haul fill and place it within the designated fill area (Map 4). The new road would require a cattle guard. New fencing from the cattle guard would tie into the existing

highway fence (Map 4). Disturbed sites would be seeded with native vegetation and erosion control measures taken to lessen site erosion.

Phase III: Scheduled Date Undetermined

Phase III actions would be completed by the ADOT contractor and are all within the ADOT right-of-way except for restoration of the abandoned portion of the Byway (Map 4). Phase III actions within the right-of-way include: removing vegetation within the footprint of the new deceleration/turn lanes and median crossover; remove old guard rail and install new guard rail; widen roadway for the deceleration/turn lane; excavate or fill for deceleration/turn lane and median crossover; construct and pave deceleration/turn lanes, median crossover and turnout; install roadway signs; and paint roadway with striping.

The abandoned portion of the Byway would be scarified and contoured to match the natural topography. The disturbed area would be seeded with native vegetation and erosion control measures taken to lessen site erosion. The grazing permittee would retain access from the Byway to the allotment west of the project area.

General Project Guidelines

All equipment and vehicles would be power washed before going to the site to lessen the chance of introducing noxious weeds. Project work would occur on week days reducing visitor access conflicts. The road would remain open during the project. Construction crews would be responsible for controlling traffic flow through or around work sites during both work and non-work hours. Non-work hour traffic flow and public safety would be provided through cautionary signing and other traffic control methods.

Rehabilitation work including seeding, mulching, vertical mulching, matting, water control devices, and other measures would be provided for authorized or unauthorized disturbance. *All work must be performed with the intention to incur only the minimum amount of disturbance necessary to achieve project objectives.* Barrel cactus in potential impact areas would be relocated as close as possible to the original growing site. Relocated cactus should be planted next to another plant or with vertical mulching. Fill material generated on site would be used on site, removed from the site or spread in a thin layer on the ground.

No Action Alternative

No Action Alternative continues the existing situation at the intersection of the Black Hill Backcountry Byway and US Highway 191. BLM would continue to emphasize using extreme caution at this intersection, especially for visitors pulling trailers. Maintain signs and road conditions providing as safe an intersection as the existing situation will allow.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Scoping/Screening Session
The following people have been involved in project planning to discuss and resolve project issues.

Bonnie Winslow, Safford Field Office (SFO), Assistant Field Office Manager
Ron Peru, SFO, Engineering Technician
Anna Rago, SFO, Archeologist
Dan McGrew, SFO, Archeologist
Michelle Cox, Rangeland Specialist
Jeff Menges, Allotment Permittee
Tim Goodman, Wildlife Biologist
Heidi Blasius, Fish Biologist
Jeff Wilbanks, Outdoor Recreation Planner.
Bill Harmon, ADOT Safford District
Darrell Miller, Greenlee County Highway District

Issues Identified in Scoping
Proposed Action
The following issues identified through the issue identification process are carried forward for additional analysis:

Vegetation- Blading and clearing vegetation may include barrel cactus.

Wildlife- Short term disturbance to wildlife during construction activities. Rodents, reptiles and other small wildlife may be displaced or killed by construction activities.

T&E Species- The project area must be surveyed and cleared for T&E species before construction begins.

Soil- Disturbance may increase sedimentation into the unnamed drainage located in the project area.

Water Quality- Storm run-off may carry sediment from newly disturbed areas into the drainage within the project area.

Cultural- The project area must be surveyed and cleared for cultural resources before construction begins.

Range- Allotment permittee will be contacted to receive input and concurrence for the proposal. Permittee must retain access to the road going west from the Byway for allotment management purposes.

Recreation- Road maintenance may delay vehicle traffic disrupting access to recreation sites.

Visual Resource Management (VRM)- Project construction activities would produce visual

changes to the Byway and 191 viewshed. BLM manages the scenic viewshed as seen from the northern end of the Byway and 191 as Visual Resource Management, Class III. This classification provides guidelines to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change allowed to the landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention, but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the landscape.

The following critical elements were examined during the review process: None were found affected.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS (required by federal law)	**AFFECTED**		**CRITICAL ELEMENTS (required by federal law)**	**AFFECTED**	
	YES	**NO**		**YES**	**NO**
ACECS		X	Solid Waste		X
Air Quality		X	VRM	X	
Cultural Resources		X	Water Quality		X
Environmental Justice/ Socioeconomics		X	Wetland/Riparian		X
Hazardous Materials		X	Wilderness		X
Flood Plains		X	Wild & Scenic River		X
Native American Religious Concerns.		X	T&E Animal Species		X
Nonnative/Invasive Plants		X	T&E Plant Species		X
Prime/Unique Farmlands		X			

Issues Identified in Scoping
No Action Alternative
The following issues identified through the issue identification process are carried forward for additional analysis:

Public Safety/Vehicle Access- The existing Byway approach to the191 intersection has a 14 percent slope. The steepness of the approach makes it difficult to access 191 from the Byway and to egress 191 onto the Byway. Line of sight for vehicle operators leaving or approaching the intersection is relatively short. Also, there are no deceleration/turn lanes or median crossover for the intersection.

The following critical elements were examined during the review process: None were found affected.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS (required by federal law)	AFFECTED		CRITICAL ELEMENTS (required by federal law)	AFFECTED	
	YES	NO		YES	NO
ACECS		X	Solid Waste		X
Air Quality		X	VRM		X
Cultural Resources		X	Water Quality		X
Environmental Justice/ Socioeconomics		X	Wetland/Riparian		X
Hazardous Materials		X	Wilderness		X
Flood Plains		X	Wild & Scenic River		X
Native American Religious Concerns.		X	T&E Animal Species		X
Nonnative/Invasive Plants		X	T&E Plant Species		X
Prime/Unique Farmlands		X			

DESCRIPTION OF IMPACTS

Proposed Action

Vegetation- Typical vegetation in the project area is primarily creosote mixed with prickly pear, barrel cactus, fish hook, hedge hog, and pencil cholla. Vegetation would be removed from the new road foot print. Vegetation within approximately 60 percent of the 40 acre project area may receive construction activity impacts.

Wildlife- Wildlife using the new road foot print area as habitat would be permanently displaced and possibility killed or harmed. Generally, wildlife would be temporarily displaced from the project area and adjacent land.

T&E Species- No T&E species would be affected by the proposed project.

Soil- Construction activities may impact soil within 60 percent of the 40 acre project area. Soil within the new road foot print would be disturbed. New soil would be exposed as fill within the new road foot print.

Water Quality- The newly disturbed areas may produce a temporary increase in sediment load should rain occur before the site stabilizes.

Cultural- There is no cultural properties affected within the project area.

Range- Permittee would retain road access to his allotment on the west side of the Byway.

Recreation- Road maintenance crew and work activities may temporarily disturb visitor access on the Byway and to the RNCA. Vehicle access would continue, although there could be periodic delays while work is underway. The proposal would improve vehicle access and visitor safety. Increases in visitor use may occur as a direct result from improved vehicle access.

Visual Resource Management (VRM)- The proposed project retains the existing character of the landscape. The level of change would be moderate relative to the current situation. Management activities would attract attention, but would not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes would repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the landscape. Disturbed sites would produce a temporary visual impact until reclamation measures take hold.

No Action Alternative
Visitor access and public safety issues identified in the scoping process of the No Action Alternative would not be resolved.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Proposed Action
Management actions in the Gila Box National Riparian Conservation Area (RNCA) Plan are being implemented and changing the cumulative human impacts to the RNCA and the surrounding area. Cumulative impacts resulting from implementation of the plan have been analyzed in the plan, environmental assessment. Riverview and Owl Canyon Campgrounds, Lee Trailhead, Serna Cabin, Old Safford Bridge Picnic Area and Floatboat Put-in, Dry Canyon Floatboat Take-out and other facilities have already been constructed. Planned road construction, improvements and maintenance is ongoing as described in the plan. The proposed action would contribute little to cumulative impacts associated with the Black Hills Back Country Byway and the RNCA.

No Action Alternative
No additional cumulative impacts would be realized through the No Action Alternative. Continuing existing management actions such as emphasizing the use of extreme caution at the intersection, and maintaining 191 and Byway signs and road conditions does not produce additional cumulative impacts.

MITIGATION/STIPULATION MEASURES

Cultural and Paleontological Resource

1. Any archaeological or historical artifacts or remains, or vertebrate fossils discovered during construction, maintenance and use shall be left intact and undisturbed; all work in the area shall stop immediately and the Assistance Field Manager for Planning and Monitoring shall be notified immediately. Commencement of operations shall be allowed upon clearance by the Assistant Field Manager.
2. An additional cultural and paleontological resource survey may be required in the event that the project location is changed or additional surface disturbing operations

are added to the project after the initial survey. Any such survey would have to be completed prior to commencement of operations.

3. If in connection with operations under this authorization, any human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects of cultural patrimony as defined in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (P.L. 101-601; Stat. 3048; U.S.C. 3001) are discovered, the permittee shall stop operations in the immediate area of the discovery, protect the remains and objects, and immediately notify the Assistance Field Manager for Planning and Monitoring of the discovery. The permittee shall continue to protect the immediate area of the discovery until notified by the Assistance Field Manager that operations may resume.

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3. Erosion control and/or bank protection features (e.g., silt fences, straw bales, rip-rap, or mulching) shall be used, where appropriate, to minimize channel or bank erosion and soil loss. These features shall be maintained, as necessary, during preconstruction and construction periods. Denuded areas shall be revegetatede as soon as possible with native plants and seed.
4. Earthen fill placed in locations subject to scour shall contain not more than ten percent of particles finer than 0.25 mm diameter (passing a No. 60 sieve, on a dry weight basis).

5. Upon completion of construction, the work area shall be restored to maintain the stability of upstream and downstream segment of water of the U.S. (WUS) with respect to erosion and sedimentation.
6. The permittee is responsible for ensuring construction material and/or fill, placed within the ordinary high water mark (OHWM), is free from substances (including fines that may be associated with rip-rap material) that can cause or contribute to pollution of a surface water.
7. Debris (such as soil, silt, sand, rubbish, cement, asphalt, oil or petroleum products, organic materials, tires or batteries) derived from construction activities shall not be deposited at any site where it may be washed into W.U.S and shall be properly disposed of after completion of the work.
8. The Permittee shall have a spill containment plan to ensure that polluntants are contained, removed and properly disposed of. In addition, equipment maintenance shall be preformed at an upland site away from W.U.S.
9. Runoff and seepage from roadways, embankments, golf courses and other alterations of the natural environment into W.U.S. shall not cause a violation of Water Quality Standards.
10. Water used for dust suppression shall not contain contaminants that could violate Surface Water Quality Standards.
11. Access roadways and staging areas shall be designed to allow normal storm flows to pass unimpeded. There shall be no significant change to the hydraulic conditions of the upstream and down stream watercourses as a result of these temporary construction features.
12. Temporary cluverted crossings shall be adequately sized to handle the expected flow and properly set with end sections splash pads, or headwalls that dissipate water energy to control erosion at the outlets. The culverted crossing shall be constructed to accommodate the overtopping of the road and armored to prevent erosion of the road fill.
13. At culverted and /or bridged roadway crossings, only concrete pilings, concrete supporting walls, galvanized steel, plastic, or aluminum shall be used in jurisdictional waters. Materials other than those specified must be approved by ADEQ.
14. Flows shall be diverted around work operations or the work shall be performed during low water conditions when the area is naturally dewatered. When there is water flow within the construction area, construction activity shall cease and construction equipment relocated outside the watercourse.

AGENCIES and INDIVIDUALS CONSULTED

Bonnie Winslow, Safford Field Office (SFO), Assistant Field Office Manager
Ron Peru, SFO, Engineering Technician
Anna Rago, SFO, Archeologist
Dan McGrew, SFO, Archeologist
Michelle Cox, Rangeland Specialist
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Bill Harmon, ADOT Safford District

Darrell Miller, Greenlee County Highway District

References Cited

BLM 1991. Safford District Resource Management Plan, Environmental Impact Statement. Safford, AZ: BLM Safford Field Office.

BLM 1998. Gila Box Management Plan, Environmental Assessment and Decision Record. Safford, AZ: BLM Safford Field Office.

Preparer: Jeff Wilbanks, Outdoor Recreation Planner

Date: March 25, 2005

Attachments: Project maps and Cultural Resource Compliance Documentation Record